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National Parks Serve as Powerful Economic Engines for Local Communities, Supporting 252,000 Jobs

Visitor Spending Results in \$30.1 Billion Economic Benefit

WASHINGTON –National Parks continued to be important economic engines for local communities, with visitors generating \$30.1 billion in economic activity and supporting 252,000 jobs nationwide in 2011, according to a peer-reviewed report released today by the National Park Service.

“Places like the Grand Canyon or the Statue of Liberty take our breath away and inspire us with their beauty and history, but our national parks also serve as anchors for our nation’s economy,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “People who visit parks need transportation, places to stay, and meals to eat – all of which support businesses and provide jobs in local communities.”

The statistics for 2011 are based on the spending of nearly 279 million national park visitors; more than one third of that total spending, or \$13 billion, went directly into communities within 60 miles of a park. The numbers are on par with previous years.

“Everyone knows that national parks are great places to visit that offer inspiring educational experiences, unparalleled outdoor recreation, and a whole lot of fun,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “But what this report shows is that America’s national parks are also critical economic engines, not only for our neighbors in gateway communities, but for our entire country. The national parks return more than \$10 for every \$1 the American taxpayer invests in the National Park Service; that makes good stewardship sense and good business sense.”

Salazar and Jarvis warned that mandatory budget cuts under sequestration will result in reduced hours of operation for visitor centers, shorter seasons, and possibly closing campgrounds, hiking trails, and other recreational areas when there is insufficient staff to ensure the protection of visitors, staff and resources. Should Congress fail to act before the March 1 deadline, the public should expect reduced hours and services not only at America’s 398 national parks but also at the 561 national wildlife refuges and over 268 public land units.

The reduced services will have a direct impact on the local communities and businesses that depend on the income generated from visitors to America’s public lands.

The National Park Service report is done on an annual basis and is prepared through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University. The entire report, with information by park and by state on visitor spending, jobs and other impacts, is available online

at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.cfm#MGM> (click '*Economic Benefits to Local Communities from National Park Visitation and Payroll, 2011*'). According to the report, most visitor spending supports jobs in lodging, food, and beverage service (63 percent) followed by recreation and entertainment (17 percent), other retail (11 percent), transportation and fuel (7 percent), and wholesale and manufacturing (2 percent).

This week the National Park Service also released its 2012 visitation numbers showing an increase of 3.8 million over the previous year for a total of 282.8 million visitors to the National Park Service's 398 parks. Visitation broken down by park and state is available online at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/>. These numbers will be the basis for next year's economic benefits report.

For more state-by-state information on national parks and how the National Park Service is working with communities go to [www.nps.gov/\[STATENAME\]](http://www.nps.gov/[STATENAME]), for example: <http://www.nps.gov/virginia>.

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